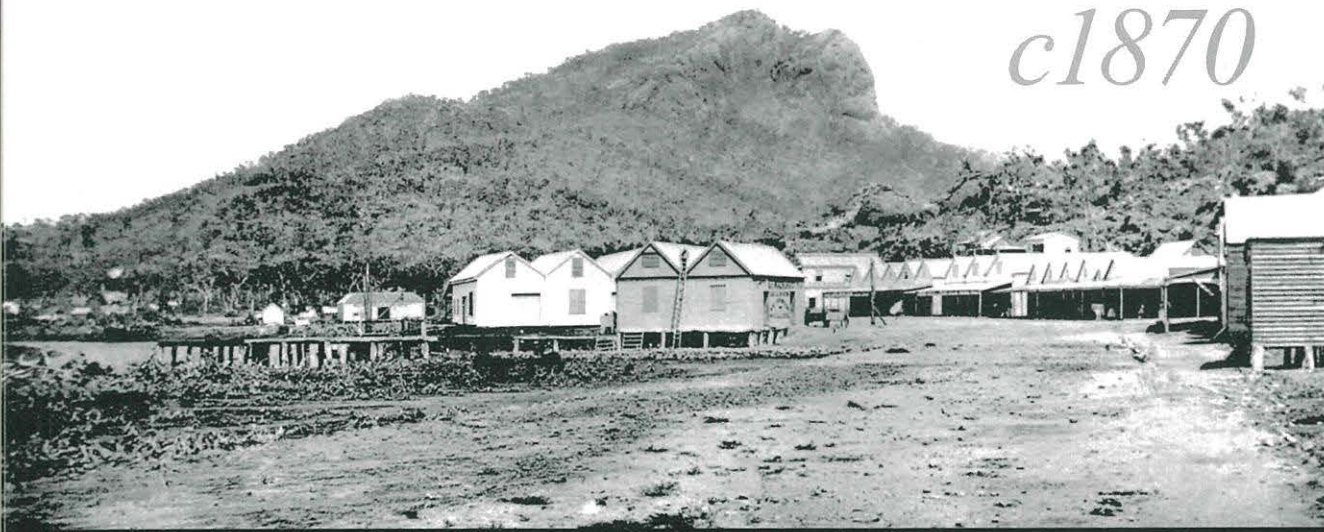


*c1870*



# Goldfields That Made Townsville

Cape River Ravenswood Charters Towers

*c1905*



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Geoff Hansen Lyndon Megarrity Diane Menghetti

# **GOLDFIELDS THAT MADE TOWNSVILLE**

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## North Queensland History Preservation Society Objectives

- To encourage the researching and writing of north Queensland history.
- To publish well-researched and well-written works that will help preserve and disseminate north Queensland history: publications will comprise new works and older ones that warrant re-publication.
- To work with individuals and organisations (e.g. museums, historical societies, family history groups and educational institutions) to further the above objectives.

# **GOLDFIELDS THAT MADE TOWNSVILLE**

**Cape River, Ravenswood  
and Charters Towers**

**Geoffrey E.P. Hansen and Lyndon Megarrity  
(With a paper by the late Diane Menghetti)**



**North Queensland History Series**

**Number 8**

**North Queensland History Preservation Society  
Townsville Museum and Historical Society**

**2018**

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Geoffrey Edward Peter Hansen, 1947-

Lyndon Megarrity, 1971-

Diane Menghetti, 1940-2012

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**Dedicated to two James Cook University historians  
who contributed much to the researching and writing  
of north Queensland's mining history.**

**Kett Kennedy (1948-2014)  
Diane Menghetti (1940-2012)**

## Foreword

A bird's eye view of north Queensland in the early 1860s would have seen a territory still largely in Aboriginal hands, with a thin net of European pastoral settlement flung across only part of the region. A handful of ports – Bowen, Townsville, Cardwell, Burketown, Normanton – served the graziers and the only inland towns were really just teamsters' camps. Gold changed the north. It brought hundreds of instant inland towns, created new ports, and boosted older ports. Other minerals were soon found and attracted yet more colonists. The non-Indigenous population soared and though the Aborigines suffered from an escalation in frontier violence, mining also brought them an industry through which they could join the new colonial economy on their traditional lands while retaining their independence. The miners were not just European, as the pastoralists tended to be: they came from all over the world, including north America, China, New Zealand, and south-east Asia. Service industries and farming boomed, infrastructure such as roads, railways and telegraphs tied the north to the rest of the world, and the region took on a shape that we would recognise today, even after the loss of many ephemeral mining towns. This book tells part of that story: the goldfields that formed in the hinterland of Townsville, and which did much to make this town one of the richest in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Queensland.

The authors are all graduates of James Cook University's Department of History and Politics, which from the 1970s made local and regional studies into a strength, showing that much of the published history of Australia was really the history of the nation's south-east corner and that in many ways, the history of northern Australia was different. Within that core of regional historians was a group of mining historians clustered around the late Professor Kett Kennedy and one of his PhD students, the late Associate Professor Diane Menghetti. Diane, Lyndon Megarritty and Geoff Hansen later published in other areas of regional history but in this volume, Geoff and Lyndon revisit the authors' earlier roots, reviving for a wider audience three works that give a solid introduction to the goldfields that enriched Townsville and formed two of the north's biggest inland towns, Ravenswood and Charters Towers.

This volume is a welcome addition to the North Queensland History Series. It reminds us of the importance of mining in the creation of the northern landscape, and the need for more research into the fascinating stories behind those scatters of glass and rusty metal, those iron and concrete ruins of former mills and mines, and those small cemeteries that lie scattered across the bush of the north. The editors are to be congratulated.

Jan Wegner  
Senior Lecturer in History  
James Cook University (Cairns Campus)



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Geoff Hansen and Lyndon Megarrity

# Abbreviations

## Publications

<i>ADB</i>	<i>Australian Dictionary of Biography</i>
<i>AJPH</i>	<i>Australian Journal of Politics and History</i>
<i>AR</i>	<i>Annual Report of the Queensland Department of Mines</i>
<i>BC</i>	<i>Brisbane Courier</i>
<i>CBE</i>	<i>Cleveland Bay Express</i>
<i>C&amp;CMM</i>	<i>Cummins &amp; Campbell's Monthly Magazine</i>
<i>NM</i>	<i>Northern Miner</i>
<i>NMR</i>	<i>Northern Mining Register</i>
<i>NQ Herald</i>	<i>North Queensland Herald</i>
<i>NQR</i>	<i>North Queensland Register</i>
<i>PDT</i>	<i>Port Denison Times</i>
<i>QGG</i>	<i>Queensland Government Gazette</i>
<i>QGMJ</i>	<i>Queensland Government Mining Journal</i>
<i>QPD</i>	<i>Queensland Parliamentary Debates</i>
<i>QPP</i>	<i>Queensland Parliamentary Papers</i>
<i>QV&amp;P</i>	<i>Votes and Proceedings of the Queensland Legislative Assembly</i>
<i>TDB</i>	<i>Townsville Daily Bulletin</i>

## Other

<i>ALF</i>	Australian Labour Federation
<i>AMA</i>	Amalgamated Miners' Association
<i>ASN</i>	Australian Steam Navigation Company
<i>ASX</i>	Australian Stock Exchange
<i>AWA</i>	Amalgamated Workers Association
<i>AWU</i>	Australian Workers Union
<i>COL</i>	Qld. govt. document reference – Department of the Colonial Secretary
<i>COM</i>	Qld. govt. document reference – Register of Companies
<i>GSQ</i>	Geological Survey of Queensland
<i>JCU</i>	James Cook University (formerly James Cook University of North Queensland)
<i>JCULSC</i>	James Cook University Library Special Collections
<i>LWO</i>	Qld. govt. document reference – Department of Lands and Works
<i>MP</i>	Member of Parliament
<i>MWO</i>	Qld. govt. document reference – Mining Warden's Office
<i>NQHPS</i>	North Queensland History Preservation Society
<i>NRMR</i>	New Ravenswood Mines Records
<i>PQC</i>	Picture Queensland Collection
<i>PRO</i>	Public Records Office (Kew, England)
<i>QBC</i>	Queensland Birth Certificate
<i>QLA</i>	Queensland Legislative Assembly
<i>QSA</i>	Queensland State Archives
<i>QSC</i>	Queensland Smelting Company
<i>SLQ</i>	State Library of Queensland
<i>SUR</i>	Qld. govt. document reference – Surveyor General's Department
<i>TM&amp;HS</i>	Townsville Museum and Historical Society
<i>TRE</i>	Qld. govt. document reference – Department of the Treasurer
<i>WOR</i>	Qld. govt. document reference – Department of Works



# Mining Terms and Definitions

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Adit</b>	Horizontal opening into a mine.
<b>Alluvial</b>	Description of deposits made by flowing water. For example, alluvial soil, alluvial ground and alluvial beds.
<b>Alluvial gold</b>	Gold released by erosion from the parent rock. Usually water worn and found in association with water worn sand or gravel.
<b>Alluvium</b>	Deposit formed by flowing water.
<b>Amalgamation</b>	The process by which gold and silver are extracted from pulverised ores by producing an amalgam with mercury on prepared copper plates or in pans, cups or mortar boxes.
<b>Assay</b>	Determination of constituents of rocks or minerals, particularly metal content. An assay is done by testing crushed ore samples using chemical analysis. The process can help determine whether to proceed with exploiting part of a mine. Also a noun, i.e. to conduct an “assay” or “test”.
<b>Auriferous</b>	Containing gold.
<b>Base metal</b>	Any metal (copper, iron, lead, etc.), which is altered by exposure to the air, in contrast with the “noble” metals (gold, silver, etc.).
<b>Battery</b>	A set of stamps or heavy pestles for crushing and pulverising ore in a mortar.
<b>Bedrock</b>	The solid rock underlying alluvial deposits.
<b>Berdan pan</b>	A revolving concave pan in which mill residues were ground finely with water by a heavy weight to recover the gold contained within the sand particles.
<b>Cage</b>	Open elevator into a shaft, raised or lowered by rope.
<b>Chilean mill</b>	Typically one or two heavy stone wheels on an axle that is attached to a central column in a circular pit. The other end of the axle is harnessed to one or more horses that walk around the pit where the wheel(s) crush stone on a hard pit floor.
<b>Chute</b>	A body of ore that extends downwards in a vein.
<b>Claim</b>	A square of crown land which a gold digger held and worked by virtue of his license or miner’s right.
<b>Colour</b>	Particle(s) of gold revealed when washing alluvium in a pan or dish.
<b>Concentrate</b>	Valuable minerals which have been separated from worthless rock materials. Also, the act of separating valuable minerals from worthless rock materials.
<b>Country rock</b>	The rock outside of a reef, vein or lode.
<b>Cradle</b>	A box like contrivance on rockers for treating wash dirt, to recover gold, using water to separate the dirt from the gold.
<b>Crosscut</b>	A horizontal tunnel built to connect a shaft to a lode
<b>Crusher (crushing machine)</b>	A machine for breaking quartz. Sometimes, but not exclusively, used to describe a battery or set of stampers.
<b>Crushing</b>	Reducing ore or quartz by stamps, crushers or rollers. Also used as a noun (crushings) to describe crushed ore.
<b>Deep leads</b>	Alluvial deposits buried below considerable thickness of soil or rock; may carry gold, tin, or other valuable mineral.
<b>Dip</b>	The inclination of the strata or lode from the horizontal plane. Hence, a vertical lode would dip at an angle of 90°.

<b>Dolly</b>	To break up quartz or other gold-bearing rock with a piece of wood shod with iron, in order to be able to wash out the gold. Test “crushings” were done in an iron pot with an iron pestle, often the blunt end of a crow bar.
<b>Dolly pot</b>	Name given to an iron pot used for dollying or crushing quartz or other gold-bearing rock to free gold for washing.
<b>Drift</b>	An underground excavation which is horizontal or nearly horizontal.
<b>Dry-blowing</b>	A way of separating alluvial gold from sand where water is not available. Dirt was dropped from a height and the lighter dust was blown away. A contrivance similar to a cradle was used, with bellows replacing water.
<b>Fine gold</b>	Almost pure gold. Refined gold, 24 carat. Also used to describe flour gold.
<b>Flume</b>	An artificial channel for a watercourse. An inclined channel, usually of wood and often supported on a trestle, for conveying water from a distance to be utilised for power, transportation, etc.
<b>Free-milling</b>	Crushing ore which is amenable to the amalgamation process for extracting precious metals.
<b>Granite</b>	Igneous crystalline rock composed of feldspar, quartz and mica.
<b>Grass</b>	At the surface of a mine. Thus the term “brought to grass”.
<b>Gravel</b>	Water-worn fragments of rock.
<b>Hanging wall</b>	The wall on the upper side of a vein.
<b>High-grade ore</b>	Rich ore.
<b>Igneous</b>	Rocks which have been consolidated from a molten state.
<b>Jump</b>	To take possession of a claim, the property of others, on legal grounds. In practice, jumping led to disputes which required arbitration.
<b>Leader</b>	Thin vein of quartz that could signal a larger one.
<b>Levels</b>	Horizontal passages cut from a shaft into a mine. Levels are generally cut at intervals in depth of from fifty to sixty feet from each other, and numbered according to their distance from the surface.
<b>Lode</b>	Defined mineralised portion of a country rock in a reef or vein.
<b>Low-grade ore</b>	Ores which are poor in mineral value.
<b>Mill</b>	A place where ore is crushed or milled to extract the mineral. For example, a battery or Chilean mill. Also used as a verb to describe the act of milling.
<b>Mullock</b>	Rock that has been mined but did not contain gold, hence mullock heaps.
<b>Mundic</b>	Sulphide ores, sulphide zone of an ore body, also known as “refractory ores”. Sulphide ores are harder to treat through extractive processes than ore from the oxidised zone.
<b>Nugget</b>	A large solid mass of alluvial gold.
<b>Open-cut</b>	A technique of mining in which minerals are extracted from an open pit constructed from the surface level downwards. It is different from most mining conducted in Charters Towers and Ravenswood between 1880 and 1917, which was largely focused on mining via underground tunnels and workings.
<b>Ore</b>	Rock that can be profitably mined for the metal or mineral it contains.
<b>Ore body</b>	A mass of ore which may include low-grade and waste as well as valuable minerals, but is separate in form or character from the surrounding country rock.
<b>Outcrop</b>	The part of a reef or ore body which appears at the surface.
<b>Oxidized zone</b>	The upper part of a lode, at or near the surface, that has been altered by the effects of rain and oxygen.
<b>Pan</b>	To wash earth, gravel, sand or pulverised rock in a dish for the purpose of discarding lighter or worthless rock materials from gold or other minerals. Also used as a noun as a short form for a gold pan or gold dish used in the process.
<b>Pay-dirt</b>	Auriferous gravel that is rich enough to pay for washing or working.

<b>Peg</b>	To mark out a claim or lease using marked pegs.
<b>Pinch</b>	A lode is said to pinch when it becomes small; hence, to pinch out when the load disappears.
<b>Plat</b>	A chamber cut out of rock where a level meets a shaft.
<b>Pocket</b>	A small mass or body of rich ore.
<b>Prospecting</b>	Searching for new mineral lodes or deposits.
<b>Prospector</b>	A person who searches for minerals.
<b>Puddle</b>	To disintegrate the clay in pay-dirt by soaking material before washing clean.
<b>Quartz</b>	A silicious vein material which can contain valuable minerals.
<b>Quartzite</b>	A metamorphosed sandstone in which the grains of sand have been fused together or cemented by silica.
<b>Race</b>	An artificial channel leading water to or from a point where its energy is utilised, for example in a sluicing plant.
<b>Reef</b>	A lode or vein of quartz, part of which contains valuable minerals.
<b>Refractory</b>	Ore in which the gold can be difficult to extract via the amalgamation process because of the presence of large amounts of unwanted minerals in the ore such as sulphides which are often referred to as “mundic”.
<b>Retort</b>	To recover valuable minerals from mercury amalgam by heating to drive off the mercury as a gas; also the iron container in which this process occurs.
<b>Sample</b>	A portion of ore representative of the whole.
<b>Shaft</b>	An excavation of a small cross section made for finding or mining mineral bearing leads. Shafts can be either vertical or inclined.
<b>Skip</b>	Closed iron container for raising ore in a shaft, including underlie shafts.
<b>Slimes</b>	Tailings of a finely crushed nature.
<b>Sluicing</b>	A method of extracting alluvial metal from sand and gravel by shovelling pay-dirt into a wooden flume, or trench cut into rock, with water running through to wash the dirt. The metal is caught by riffles in the bottom of the flume or trench.
<b>Smelting</b>	A process for separating base metals and gold from ore via the use of heating and melting
<b>Specimen stone</b>	A piece of rock, ore or mineral, usually not representative of the deposit from which it was derived.
<b>Stamps</b>	Heavy pestles for pulverising quartz or other solid material in a battery or mill.
<b>Stone</b>	Ore sent to the mill or treatment plant.
<b>Stopes</b>	The workings in a mine between levels or drifts from which the ore is taken in a series of steps.
<b>Stoping</b>	Breaking ore in sections of ground, above, below or between levels.
<b>Tailings</b>	The remains of ore which has been through the crushing and treatment process. Tailings were often dumped somewhere on a company’s mining lease for possible reprocessing at a future time.
<b>Tributors</b>	Groups of miners who leased part of an existing mine from a mine owner. They were contractually obliged to give the owner an agreed percentage of what they acquired from their mining activities.
<b>Truckers</b>	Mine employees whose job it is to transport ore to the surface.
<b>Underlie</b>	Shaft going down at an angle to follow a vein.
<b>Wash</b>	Extracting alluvial metal from lighter rock materials using, for example, a pan or sluice. “Wash” is also used as a noun to describe alluvial sediments.
<b>Wash-dirt</b>	Mineral bearing sediment of streams.
<b>Whim</b>	Drum onto which a rope was wound or unwound to raise or lower buckets, skips or cages in a shaft. Whims were usually powered by horses.

<b>Whip</b>	Type of winch where the rope was pulled by a horse over a pulley attached to a pole erected over a mine shaft.
<b>Winding engine</b>	An engine which turns one or two drums on which ropes are wound in order to raise or lower buckets, cages or skips in a shaft.
<b>Windlass</b>	A winch erected over the shaft and operated by hand.
<b>Winze</b>	A shaft which connects underground workings but does not reach the surface. Thus it is only accessible from within a mine.

**Sources:** G. Blainey, *The Rush that Never Ended*, Melbourne, 1963, pp.361-62; Ion L. Idriess, *Prospecting for Gold Other Minerals and Precious Stones*, rev. ed. (1931), Sydney, 1979, pp.289-92; J.C.F. Johnson, *Getting Gold: A Practical Treatise for Prospectors, Miners, and Students*, London, 1897; Diane Menghetti, "Extraction Practices and Technology on the Charters Towers Goldfield", *North Australian Research Bulletin*, No. 8, September 1982; Walter R. Skinner, *The Mining Manual for 1896*, London, 1896, pp.1352-56; Janice Wegner, *The Etheridge*, Townsville, 1990; Janice Wegner, "Croydon: Technology Transfer on a North Queensland Goldfield 1885-1915", PhD thesis, James Cook University of North Queensland, 1995, pp.514-546.

## Financial Terms and Definitions, 1870-1914

Some of the terms listed below are no longer in use or have changed in meaning. Therefore an explanation of these terms, as used in the study period, is provided for the reader.

**Shares:** An individual share constitutes the smallest unit of ownership in a company. A share sold to the public has an official financial value (e.g. 10 shillings per share), but because of mining speculation, a 10 shilling share might be sold at a higher price if the demand for shares in the company is high. The company's overall capital is divided into multiple shares which can be bought by the public. Usually shareholders will buy several shares at a time: sometimes several thousand.

**Free Shares:** Often the vendor of a mining lease (or other approved persons) will be given "free shares" by a newly formed company as part of the purchase price. In this way, the vendor is able to receive full dividends on shares he has been given by the company free of charge.

**Dividends:** Dividends are financial returns on investments. A shareholder is entitled to a share in the profits when a dividend is called. If a 50% dividend is made, an owner of a 10 shillings share can expect to receive 5 shillings in return.

**Mining Speculation and Shares:** If an investor pays 21 shillings per share for shares with an official value of 10 shillings, there are potential pitfalls. The distribution of a dividend of 50% will mean that the investor will receive 5 shillings for each 10 shillings share he has. As the official share value is 10 shillings each share, that is what the investor receives. However, if the market for shares in a company is high, and 10 shillings shares are now being sold for £1 5 shillings, the shareholder might be best advised to sell his or her shares when they rise even further and make a decent profit. Hanging on to overpriced shares might mean that the investor gets no money back at all.

**Fully-Paid Shares:** A fully-paid share is one which is fully paid up to the official value of the share (e.g. an investor has purchased 50 "£1 shares" upfront). This entitles the investor to dividends at their announced level.

**Partly-Paid Shares (Contributing Shares):** A company might decide to issue "partly-paid" or "contributing shares". These are shares which are not fully paid at the time of purchase. The shareholder, for example, might pay 5 shillings per 10 shillings share at the time of purchase. The owner of a contributing share would be expected to contribute additional funds when the company made a "call on shares" for a specified amount until the 10 shillings shares were "fully paid". The downside of being an owner of partly paid shares is that the amount of dividends received on each "partly paid" share is less than that given to fully paid shares.

***Nominal Capital and Subscribed Capital:*** Nominal capital (also called authorised capital) is the maximum financial total of the shares which a company can issue to shareholders. However, nominal capital doesn't mean *actual* capital raised. So investors looking at guides to investment will note that XYZ company has a "nominal capital of £200,000" but its *actual* capital (the amount shareholders have financially contributed to the company) will be listed down as *subscribed capital*. The subscribed capital is often much lower than the nominal capital.

**Sources:** A.R. Hall, *The Stock Exchange of Melbourne and the Victorian Economy 1852-1900*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1968; A.R. Hall, *The London Capital Market and Australia, 1870-1914*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1963; G.R. Searle, *Morality and the Market in Victorian Britain*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998.

## Notes on Measurement

With few exceptions, measurements in this book are those used in Australia before it converted to metric systems. Sterling currency units were used until 1966 and Imperial weights and measures until 1973. Common conversions are given below.

### Length

1 inch (in)	=	2.54 cm
1 foot (ft) (12 in)	=	0.305 m
1 yard (yd) (3 ft)	=	0.914 m
1 mile (1,760 yds)	=	1.61 km

### Mass

1 avoirdupois (av) ounce (oz)	=	0.028 kg
1 troy (tr) ounce (oz)	=	0.038 kg
1 pound (lb) (12 tr oz or 16 av oz)	=	0.454 kg
1 stone	=	6.35 kg
1 hundredweight (cwt)	=	50.802 kg
1 ton (2,240 lb)	=	1.02 tonne (t)

### Area

1 square yard (yd <sup>2</sup> )	=	0.836 m <sup>2</sup>
1 acre (ac)	=	0.405 ha
1 square mile	=	2.59 km <sup>2</sup>

### Volume

1 pint (pt)	=	0.568 L (or 568 mL)
1 quart (2 pt)	=	1.136 L
1 gallon (8 pt)	=	4.55 L

### Currency (Australia converted to decimal in 1966)

In 1966, Sterling currency units were:

1 penny (d) which became the equivalent of 1 cent
1 shilling (s or /-) (12d) became 10 cents
1 florin (2s) became 20 cents
1 pound (£) (20s) became \$2.00
1 guinea (£1/1/0) became \$2.10

Currency conversions are interesting but misleading measures due to inflation, or loss of money's purchasing power. At 10% inflation a year (Australia passed this rate in the 1950s, 1970s and 1980s), a currency's purchasing power, averaged over a variety of goods and services, halves in seven years. In 1966, it was meaningless to compare only wages or prices in the nineteenth century. For example, in 1867, average pay for general labourers was 5s per day or 50 cents when converted. Prices in the same years would also need to be compared to get some idea about relative living standards. Even today, comparing wages or prices in isolation over several years is problematic.

Sterling currency was written in various ways. For example, 3 pounds 14 shillings and 11 pence was written as £3/14/11 or £3.14.11; 10 shillings and 6 pence as 10s 6d or 10/6. Where there were no pence, say 8 shillings, the amount was written as 8/- or 8s.



# Origins of the Book

## Introduction

The three goldfields essays in this book are based on postgraduate history theses or dissertations completed at James Cook University. They are presented as Chapters 2, 3 and 4 and brought together under the banner that gives the book its title, *Goldfields That Made Townsville*. Chapter 1 has been written for this book to briefly explain the importance of these goldfields in making Townsville the unofficial capital city of north Queensland as defined in that chapter.

Original presentation styles in the goldfields essays differed considerably due to the requirements of their original purposes. We decided that a more uniform style or format was appropriate for reproducing the essays in the context of a Townsville history which is aimed at a wide readership interested in both mining history and more generally, in local history. However, we also decided to strike a balance between moving towards complete uniformity and preserving the flavour of the original works.

The preservation element above has two objectives.

- The first is to retain the personal writing style of each author and the way they presented findings on their topics. This approach is respectful to the late Diane Menghetti (1940-2012) given that she could not provide any inputs to this book generally or on how her essay is presented in the context of the book. Also with Menghetti's essay, we have retained all the illustrations that appeared in her original work and added nine extra images of interest. One is of Jupiter Mosman coupled with very brief biographical comment by Geoff Hansen.
- The second is to record why and when the original papers were prepared, and that is done below.

In addition, we thought it important to keep some of the introductory comments from the original theses such as the authors' approach to their research and the resources they accessed. Rather than leave all these details in the revised essays where they might be a distraction for some readers, particularly given that the comments differed considerably due to the nature of the original works, we have reproduced them below with some minor amendments where appropriate.

## Cape River Goldfield (1867-1870) – *Geoff Hansen*

This essay is based on a dissertation entitled "A Mining History of the Cape River Gold Field (1867-1870)" that Hansen completed in 1996 towards a Graduate Diploma of Arts. Although his focus was on mining history, his research revealed interesting material on aspects of social life on this early and remote goldfield in north Queensland. His supervisor, the late Diane Menghetti, talked to him about doing a Master of Arts degree by thesis to present this additional material and thus provide a broader historical coverage of the goldfield. Although Hansen started work on the

MA thesis, he did not complete it due to increasing work commitments as a consultant and then his appointment to a full-time management position in 1998.

The introductory paragraph in the 1996 dissertation, which explained the rationale for selecting the Cape River Goldfield as a topic, is reproduced below but as four paragraphs instead of one.

The Cape River gold field, in the Kennedy District of north Queensland, is a neglected area of historical study. Blainey's pioneering work on Australia's mining industry<sup>1</sup> does not mention the Cape nor does Queensland's official jubilee book<sup>2</sup>. A centenary history by Cilento and Lack<sup>3</sup> made brief acknowledgment. More recent general histories of Queensland, by writers such as Fitzgerald<sup>4</sup> and Johnston,<sup>5</sup> also provide brief coverage of the field. Bolton's initial work on north Queensland<sup>6</sup> gives a little more coverage but subsequent regional historical studies<sup>7</sup> have not expanded on his work. Neal's local history of the Dalrymple Shire<sup>8</sup> is a partial exception as it elevates the status of the Cape to a short chapter.

There appear to be three reasons for the Cape receiving little attention. First, the historically important period of the alluvial rush and the early struggle to develop reefs, from 1867 to 1870, occurred before an effective mining administration was established in Queensland. Consequently, there were few official records and even fewer survived.<sup>9</sup> Secondly, a quick succession of discoveries of larger and more permanent fields such as Ravenswood in 1868, the Etheridge in 1870, Charters Towers in 1871 and the rich alluvial Palmer River field in 1873 eclipsed the importance of the Cape. Historians have found such fields more attractive because they substantially impacted on the economy and social fabric of the north. The volume of material available for research assisted their work. Thirdly, as a consequence of these reasons, brief coverage of the Cape became routine thus reinforcing its apparent unimportance.

However, the Cape has a record of notable "firsts" in north Queensland, some of historical importance and others more of passing interest. From a mining history perspective, it was the first major alluvial gold rush and proclaimed gold field. As the rush developed, the first wave of experienced miners arrived and shortly thereafter, government officials established the north's first goldfield administration. Prospectors discovered quartz reefs in 1868 and were granted the first reefing claims. In response to demand for quartz crushing machines, the first battery arrived in north Queensland in 1868 followed by a much larger and more powerful one towards mid-1869.

Social impacts were also important. Aborigines encountered their first substantial mining population as hopeful diggers, some with families, established north Queensland's first inland community. In 1868, the Cape had 2,500 to 3,000 people,<sup>10</sup> about one-third of north Queensland's population.<sup>11</sup> Among the miners came the first significant wave of non-British peoples, most notably the Chinese. The number and range of inaugural events signals the need for an in-depth regional study of the Cape River goldfield as the catalyst for rapid economic and social change in north Queensland. This paper, based mainly on primary sources such as newspaper reports, reminiscences<sup>12</sup> and published government reports, is a step towards such a wider study. It focuses on the mining history<sup>13</sup> of the field from its discovery to 1870 when the field's first and most important era ended.

Apart from removing the above introduction and general editing and refinement, the following significant changes have been made to the original dissertation.

- Aspects of social history have been added to round out the history of north Queensland's first significant goldfield and inland settlement.
- Two appendices have been added. The most important is Appendix 1 which

gives background on Benjamin Toll's memoirs that are an important source for the story, plus a brief biography of Toll.

- Much of the contextual discussion on the early settlement of north Queensland, the economic crisis that hit Queensland and Townsville in 1866, and the severe 1867 cyclone that added to Townsville's setbacks have been removed and included in Chapter 1: "How Goldfields Made Townsville".

The addition of social history has made the essay in Chapter 2 disproportionately long. However, it has been left longer because this is the first substantial history of the Cape River Goldfield to be published. Furthermore, given its short life, the goldfield is less likely to be revisited by historians. If it is, the chapter would be a useful resource.

## **Ravenswood Goldfield (1868-1917) – *Lyndon Megarrity***

Lyndon Megarrity's paper in this volume is based on his 1997 Master of Arts degree thesis entitled "A History of New Ravenswood Ltd. 1899-1917". New Ravenswood was the most successful mining company working in Ravenswood during its first half-century (1868-1917). The thesis was completed under the supervision of the late Kett Kennedy (1948-2014). For the purposes of this book, the author has revised his earlier work to ensure that the town of Ravenswood and the wider economic activities of its settlers are given more emphasis in the text. Nevertheless, New Ravenswood Ltd. remains a clear focus for this revised work, as it dominated the field between 1899 and 1917.

The introduction of the original thesis provided brief details of previous studies on the history of New Ravenswood Ltd. and the numerous additional and extensive records that Megarrity used to build upon earlier works on his topic. It is given below with very minor amendments.

The principal primary source used to construct this paper has been the New Ravenswood Mines Records, held on microfilm at the James Cook University Library. The records comprise thousands of pages of correspondence from the General Manager, A.L. Wilson, to his London directors, chronologically compiled into over half a dozen letterbooks. Collectively, these letterbooks give a comprehensive description of New Ravenswood Ltd. and its associated companies for a period of twenty years. Of course, the historian must be aware that the main "voice" and opinion conveyed in the letterbooks is that of the General Manager. Nevertheless, a reasonably balanced historical perspective is still possible, due to the inclusion in the volumes of hundreds of cables sent by the London board to Wilson.

Research at the Public Records Office in London uncovered many previously unknown documents related to New Ravenswood Ltd. and other British-owned companies. These include summaries of capital and shares, shareholder lists, prospectuses and company balance sheets. Access to this new information brings a new dimension to Ravenswood's mining past, presenting the most complete and accurate data concerning New Ravenswood Ltd.'s company structure and financial details. A strong business link between New Ravenswood Ltd. and the Queensland Smelting Company has also been clearly established.

Research on the local impact of New Ravenswood Ltd. has mainly focused on the Annual Reports of the Queensland Department of Mines, with particular reference to the reports of the Ravenswood Mining Wardens. Contemporary North Queensland newspapers

such as the *North Queensland Herald* provided insights into the “boom” in Ravenswood shares in the early 1900s; the *North Queensland Register* and the *Worker* fleshed out the evolution of the Ravenswood Strike of 1912—a great turning point in the history of New Ravenswood Ltd. and the town.<sup>14</sup>

Since the 1970s, there have been several articles and books published about the history of Ravenswood. Don Roderick’s 1975 article “Ravenswood 1868-1917”<sup>15</sup> provided the first academic account of Ravenswood’s history. It established, for future researchers, the basic chronology and major events of the goldfield’s history. Subsequently, Joan Neal’s 1984 history of the Dalrymple Shire<sup>16</sup> included a section on New Ravenswood Ltd. which emphasised its importance to the town, as well as Wilson’s management style. In the same year, Doug Hunt published an article on the Ravenswood Strike of 1912, highlighting the impact of militant Queensland unionism on its conduct and outcome.<sup>17</sup> Both Hunt and Neal consulted the New Ravenswood Mines Records, a copy of which had been recently acquired by James Cook University Library from long-term Ravenswood resident, Percy Kean.

In 1987, Jennifer Caspani presented the most comprehensive study regarding the history of New Ravenswood Ltd. up to that point in time.<sup>18</sup> Her interpretation primarily focused on the social impact of the company on the local community, as well as the General Manager’s dominant role in the mining and social life of the town. This study of Ravenswood builds upon the research of Roderick, Neal, Hunt and Caspani, but offers a different approach to the town’s history. It argues that to fully understand Ravenswood’s place in North Queensland history, it is essential to examine the many outside influences which determined its development.

## **The Gold Mines of Charters Towers – Diane Menghetti**

Diane Menghetti’s essay “The Gold Mines of Charters Towers” was published in K.H. Kennedy (ed.), *Readings in North Queensland Mining History*, Vol. 2, James Cook University, Townsville, 1982. Kennedy’s two volumes of readings contained 18 essays on a wide range of north Queensland mining history topics. Menghetti compiled the essay from research she was doing for a thesis entitled “Charters Towers” for her degree of Doctor of Philosophy. She submitted the completed thesis in 1984.

Menghetti’s introductory paragraph to the essay in *Readings in North Queensland Mining History* was succinct and is reproduced below.

Little has been written about the mining history of the richest of the north Queensland goldfields, Charters Towers, despite its yield of over seven million ounces of fine gold and its major contribution to the social, political and commercial development of the region. Notwithstanding seminal works by Blainey,<sup>19</sup> Bolton<sup>20</sup> and Stoodley,<sup>21</sup> the most detailed account remains that written in 1917 by geologist Reid.<sup>22</sup> This can only be explained in terms of a general neglect of mining history by Australian historians since, with some notable exceptions,<sup>23</sup> the Charters Towers records are quite comprehensive – this being one of the few fields for which mining wardens’ files are available.<sup>24</sup> The social and political history of the city of Charters Towers has been better served, although the specialised nature of the work so far completed<sup>25</sup> undoubtedly leaves room for a general history.

Menghetti’s thesis was never published but as she once told Geoff Hansen when he spoke to her about publishing it, most important parts have been covered in published essays and serialised in the *North Queensland Register*. Apart from the essay used in this book, there are “Extraction Practices and Technology on the Charters Towers

Goldfield” in the *North Australian Research Bulletin* (1982) and “Mine and Town: Health and Safety on Charters Towers” in the *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland* (1988). Furthermore, some of the information Menghetti gathered from oral histories while researching her thesis, and perhaps from later research, was included in her later work *I Remember: Memories of Charters Towers* (1989).<sup>26</sup>

Given that the essay reproduced in this book emanated from Menghetti’s thesis, her opening Abstract and the concluding section of her Introduction to that broader work are also reproduced below. These extracts and the nature of the works published from the thesis give readers the opportunity to appreciate the breadth and depth of her work. They are unedited except for the addition of bullets.

### ***Abstract***

The academic establishment has probably not been waiting anxiously for a PhD thesis on Charters Towers. Nevertheless there are several good reasons why one should have been written. Firstly, the town played an important part in attracting settlers to North Queensland and in determining what sort of people these settlers would be. Secondly, the field made useful contributions to the technology and capitalisation of Australian mining at a time when the industry was growing rapidly. Thirdly, political developments on Charters Towers influenced the style of Colonial politics, particularly labour politics, in a formative period. Lastly, there is an intrinsic historical interest in charting the growth of a community founded in the wilderness at the peak of the industrial-capitalist era. While it would be excessive to suggest it as a microcosm of the growth of a capitalist society there are, I believe, insights to be gained from the rise and decline of this goldfield.

### ***Introduction (Concluding Section)***

All regional history topics present awesome problems of selection and organisation of material. Clearly the mode of production and its resulting superstructure are interdependent, yet to combine them in a single chronological history would breed confusion. On the other hand, the time scale is usually too long to allow for a rigidly thematic treatment: the interdependence would become completely obscured. Therefore the method chosen here is to break the life of the field into four periods which correspond roughly to the accumulation decade, the primitive capitalism of the eighties, the international capitalism of the nineties and the decline of the field in the years more or less preceding the First World War. Within these periods or sections it is possible to be thematic, the emphasis falling on those strands which seem to have the most significance for the time. In the seventies the thesis deals with the settlement of the field, the movement towards company mining, and nineteenth-century milling technology, while social and political life are treated together. The eighties section develops the theme of company mining before devoting two chapters to politics – the first to the nineteenth-century political style of Isidor Lissner, and the second to the rise of the labour movement. Its last chapter looks at the social life of the period. The third section considers changes in mining and milling, the effects of the 1890s depression, the rise of Labor politics and society at the end of the century. The final section, the longest, briefly outlines the careers of top mines in the field; it then looks at health and safety on the Towers, the decline of the labour movement and lifestyles in the early twentieth century. Such organisation has necessitated a decision to sacrifice some uniformity of style to the descriptive and evocative possibilities of adapting the writing to the subject matter. Although this has led to some imbalance between, say, the mining and the social history chapters, it has allowed the extensive use of oral history in the penultimate section of the thesis.

A great wealth of oral material has been collected and stored in the North Queensland Oral History Collection of the James Cook University History Department. Memories of people who were born in Charters Towers during the 1890s, and who grew up in the town, have been transcribed from these tapes. These transcriptions have been ordered in an attempt to evoke the atmosphere of:

- public life – the town, the park on Sunday and the churches;
- home life – fathers' jobs and their associated health problems, mothers' jobs, almost invariably in the house, and domestic arrangements;
- commercial life from a viewpoint of a general storekeeper;
- private life – childbirth, the family and sexuality;
- the life of minority groups – the Chinese, Aboriginals and the destitute.

The most vivid youthful memories, however, are of recreation, schooling and leaving school to find work. For most interviewees this period coincides with the decline of the mines and the general exodus from the town.

This section is not intended to supplement archival research. Oral sources are notoriously inaccurate about events and dates; further, if the material were offered as an accurate description of the life of minority groups in Charters Towers it would be downright insolent. Rather, it is intended to evoke an atmosphere – to invite the reader to feel what it was like to live on this goldfield at the turn of the century. To this end some slowness and repetition have been retained in the text. This is the speech pattern of Charters Towers, and speech patterns also have something to convey. Although the material has been heavily edited and each section contains extracts from several tapes, it has been the author's intention to intrude as little as possible into these memories. In the end, all sources are polluted. Nineteenth-century documents were almost invariably produced by middle class white males, often with experience of only a limited section of their community. This final section is an attempt at making some light redress to the balance of the history.

## Conclusion

With the exception of Diane Menghetti's thesis, which has more coverage than what is presented in Chapter 4 here, we do not expect many readers would want to refer back to the original theses covered in this background. Readers interested in material in Menghetti's thesis could access it in James Cook University's Eddie Koiki Mabo Library or online. Alternatively, they could refer to the other published works from it that are listed above.

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## Endnotes

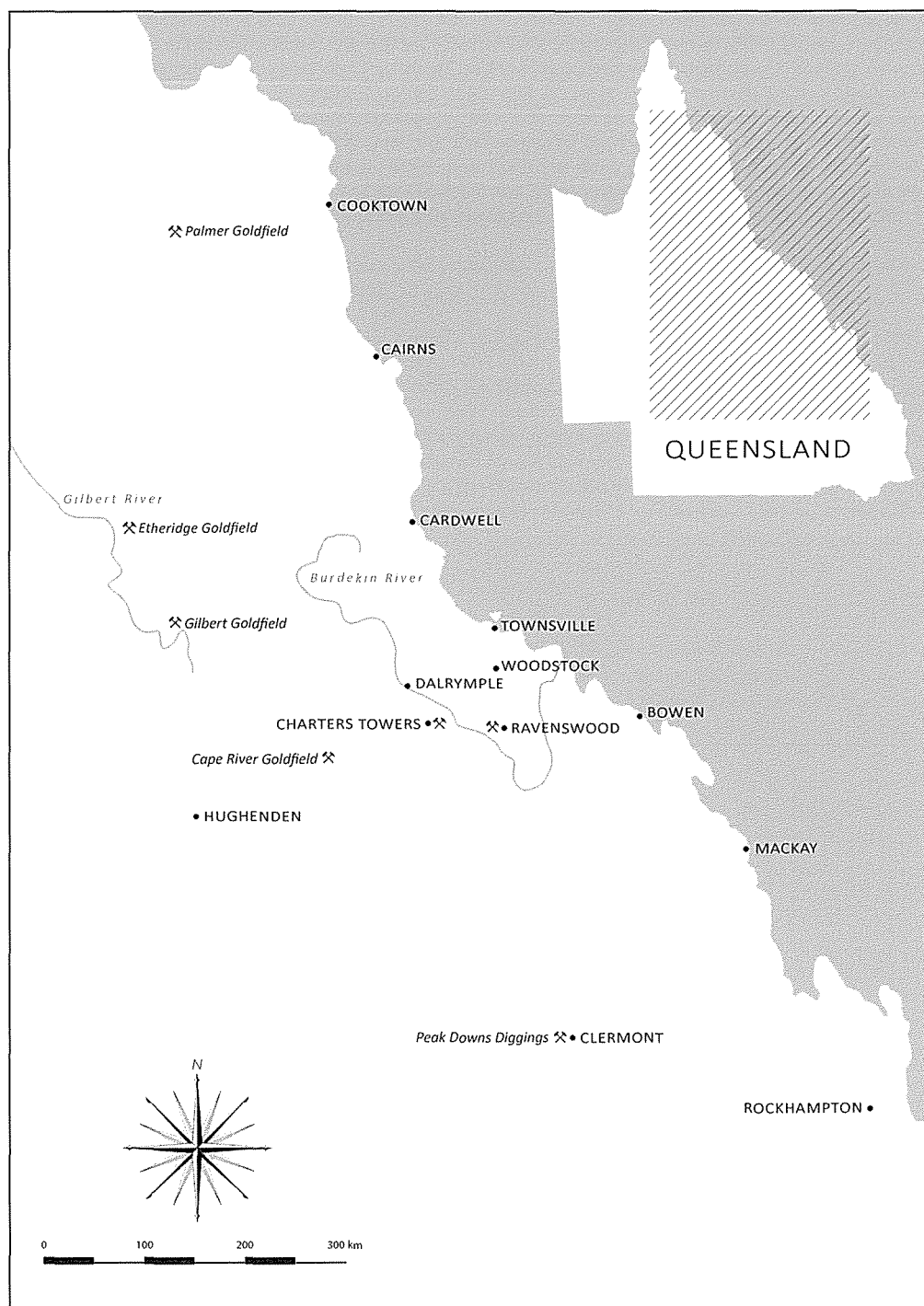
- 1 Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush that Never Ended: A History of Australian Mining*, 2nd ed., Melbourne, 1974. Notably, an earlier history of world gold rushes mentioned the Cape as one of the “best” “minor” discoveries in Queensland. W.P. Morrell, *The Gold Rushes*, London, 1940, p.287.
- 2 *Our First Half-Century: A Review of Queensland Progress Based upon Official Information*, Brisbane, 1909.
- 3 Sir Raphael Cilento and Clem Lack, *Triumph in the Tropics: An Historical Sketch of Queensland*, Brisbane, 1959, pp.205-06.
- 4 Ross Fitzgerald, *From the Dreaming to 1915: A History of Queensland*, St Lucia, 1982, pp.157-58.
- 5 W. Ross Johnston, *The Call of the Land: A History of Queensland*, Milton, 1982, pp.69-70.
- 6 G.C. Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away: A History of North Queensland to 1920*, Canberra, 1972, pp.45-46.
- 7 For example, see the James Cook University of North Queensland series, *Lectures on North Queensland History*, 4 vols., Townsville, 1974-1984 and K.H. Kennedy (ed.), *Readings in North Queensland Mining History*, 2 vols., Townsville, 1980 and 1982.
- 8 Joan Carmichael Neal, *Beyond the Burdekin: A History of the Dalrymple Shire 1879-1979*, Charters Towers, 1984, pp.121-26.
- 9 Queensland State Archives (QSA) apparently has few records on the Cape prior to 1871. Ruth S. Kerr gives an overview in “Mining History Bibliography”, in *Queensland Historical Mining Sites Study Report for the Department of Environment and Heritage*, Vol. 1, 1992, particularly pp.1-5. QSA records await further investigation. Richard Daintree prepared early geological reports on the Cape. Subsequent geological reports relied on his work and hearsay for historical background initially and later, simply on previous reports.
- 10 William Hill, clerk to the Cape’s Gold Commissioner Charters, estimated the male population at 2,500 in mid-1868. W.R.O. Hill, *Forty-Five Years’ Experiences in North Queensland: 1861 to 1905*, Brisbane, 1907, p.47. Charters estimated average population at 3,000 from 1868 to 1870. “Minutes of Evidence, Royal Gold Fields Commission of Queensland”, *Queensland Votes & Proceedings (QV&P)*, Vol. 1, 1871, p.587.
- 11 North Queensland’s population was approximately 9,800 in 1868. C.P. Harris, *Regional Economic Development in Queensland 1859 to 1981 with Particular Emphasis on North Queensland*, Canberra, 1984, p.37. Harris used a broader definition of north Queensland than that used in this book and therefore the comparison used in the introduction in the dissertation is now irrelevant.
- 12 Published reminiscences containing first-hand accounts of the Cape are treated as primary sources. Although often written many years after events, reminiscences warrant equal status with newspaper reports which are often second-hand and further limited by the abilities and biases of their authors.
- 13 Some aspects of economic activity and social life are touched on briefly for contextual purposes.
- 14 A microfilmed copy of several issues of the *Ravenswood Miner* published between 1871 and 1874 is held at the James Cook University Library. Very few issues of the *Ravenswood Mining Journal* are known to exist.
- 15 D.C. Roderick, “Ravenswood 1868-1917”, in B.J. Dalton (ed.), *Lectures on North Queensland History Second Series*, Townsville, 1975.
- 16 Joan Neal, *Beyond the Burdekin: Pioneers, Prospectors and Pastoralists: A History of the Dalrymple Shire 1879-1979*, Charters Towers, 1984.
- 17 Doug Hunt, “The Ravenswood Strike”, in B.J. Dalton (ed.), *Lectures in North Queensland History No. 4*, Townsville, 1984.
- 18 Jennifer Kathleen Caspani, “A.L. Wilson and the New Ravenswood Company: A Study of the ‘Wilson Era’ in Ravenswood 1899-1917”, BA (Hons) thesis, James Cook University, 1987.
- 19 G. Blainey, *The Rush that Never Ended*, Melbourne, 1963.
- 20 G.C. Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away*, Canberra, 1972.
- 21 June Stoodley, “The Queensland Gold Miner in the Late Nineteenth Century: His Influence and Interests”, MA thesis, University of Queensland, 1964.
- 22 J.H. Reid, “The Charters Towers Goldfield”, Geological Survey of Queensland (GSQ), publication No. 256, 1917. Other contemporary histories include those by P.F. Sellheim “History of the Charters Towers Goldfield: Its Rise and Progress”, in *Annual Report of the Department of Mines 1897 (AR)*, pp.23-27; L.W. Marsland, *The Charters Towers Gold Mines: A Descriptive and Historical*



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- 23 For example, records of the Charters Towers miners' unions are incomplete, and those extant are scattered and sometimes inaccessible.
- 24 MWO 11A Series, QSA.
- 25 See for example L.J. Colwell, "Some Aspects of Social Life in Charters Towers from 1872-1900", BA (Hons) thesis, James Cook University, 1969; Sharon Ann Hayston, "Interaction of Religion and Society in Charters Towers, 1872-1900", BA (Hons) thesis, James Cook University, 1976; and Joan Neal, "Charters Towers and the Boer War", BA (Hons) thesis, James Cook University, 1980.
- 26 Full bibliographical details of Diane Menghetti's works here are: "Extraction Practices and Technology on the Charters Towers Goldfield", *North Australian Research Bulletin*, No. 8, 1982; "Mine and Town: Health and Safety on Charters Towers", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, Vol. 13, No. 6, 1988; and *I Remember: Memories of Charters Towers*, James Cook University, Townsville, 1989.





**Map 1.01** Location map, Townsville and key northern goldfields in 1873. The location advantage that Townsville had over Bowen for the Cape River, Ravenswood and Charters Towers Goldfields can be seen by the shorter distance to Townsville. Further, there was less potential for the Burdekin River to form a barrier, particularly on its lower reaches after it swings north. (Map by Sulyn Design.)